



Riverside General Plan Program

Public Safety Topic Group Meeting Friday, June 6, 2003

On Friday, June 6, 2003, City of Riverside Planning staff and the General Plan consultant team led by Cotton/Bridges/Associates and MIG held a *Public Safety Topic Group* meeting. Attendees included:

Bonnie Reed, Emergency Services Program Supervisor for the county of Riverside
Lt. James Cannon, City of Riverside Police Department
Lt. Mark Boyer, City of Riverside Police Department
Joan Breeding Letbetter, City of Riverside Fire Department

Public safety officials were provided an overview of the General Plan Program and were provided a summary of the community visioning process conducted to-date. They were asked to identify how to best pursue the City's vision in the context of the following vision themes:

- A. How we work
- B. How we play
- C. How we live
- D. How we get around
- E. How we learn

Attendees were asked to describe how the community visions could be expressed in terms of public safety considerations. Responses included:

- Citizens and the City are Free from crime
- Quick emergency response when you call 911 (decentralized facilities?)
- Readily available services – the expectation that emergency services will be there regardless of size or incidence.
- Some agency has made sure that the building is safe – the building has been inspected to ascertain its safety

Other comments from the public safety officials are below, arranged by the above visioning themes.

How we work

There is a need for better communications between public safety agencies and other city departments. Emergency services providers need to know when new developments are going in and get a better sense of the kind of impacts on emergency/public safety services.

Orangecrest and Mission Grove are farthest away from the city. Police found out about this after the homes were being built. It takes police 30 minutes to get to the site, with a population of 40,000 out there, but the people who live out there think that the police are out there. Police are held accountable for tardy response times.

The Police Department has 360 sworn officers – a very low ratio for city this size. Of this, only 127 are field officers.

The Police Department consists of HQ, plus a separate investigations unit, plus a separate field officer unit – all in different places – Spruce, Lincoln, and Orange.

The Police Department was decentralized in 1980s; it had previously all been under one roof. This spread frustrates the need for gathering intelligence. If police are spread out over different areas and not talking, no good intelligence will result.

There are 55 firefighters on duty each day. Our numbers have remained the same over many years while city has grown, and our response time has increased. We need to compare the city's numbers relative to national standards.

How we live

Public safety infrastructure hasn't kept pace with new development; public safety providers don't want to stop development, but want to keep pace. There is a perception that property taxes are going to fund police services.

The main police station isn't a neighborhood station. There really needs to be full-service precinct stations.

The Chief has a concept of precincts – 5 areas of city – that would be self-contained, staffed areas with officers dedicated to these individual areas.

Precincts bring the community together – “this is our police station” – and create a neighborhood investment.

The concept of a community “neighborhood superstore” that could have police, code enforcement, utilities, planners, and other city services – fully computerized – all under one roof is desirable.

But if City doesn't increase the number of public safety personnel, the superstore concept will not work. More buildings are great, but not if there are no people in them. The Council needs to be willing to increase the budget.

The City has traditionally underfunded police initiatives. Money could be saved by cutting back other programs.

Regarding City Hall security: we spend \$500k per year for this but it isn't needed.

Park Ranger service is a feel-good thing but costs a lot of money.

Insurance rates are affected by response times.

We have lots of neighborhood watch groups, but no framework for them to put their heads together and share ideas.

How we get around

The General Plan needs to include wording about Fire Department response times; this needs to be a part of the discussion. The goal is to respond in less than 5 minutes. Average time citywide is about 6 minutes; this level is a real concern.

The decentralization of police/other city facilities would preclude the need for everyone to go downtown, which could help solve some traffic issues.

We understand the value of narrow streets, but Fire Service is very concerned unless there is no parking on one side or both. Show examples and educate staff as to how this works in other places.

How we learn

Some people say that if cops just spent more time in schools, wouldn't be a need for so many police on the street.

Most crime occurs when school is out (afternoons, summer).

The Police Department has not partnered well with the school districts. The Police Department provides crossing guards at schools, which doesn't cost the schools anything. There are other things the Police Department could do with the schools, but things aren't happening.

In Arlanza, you could have a library near the (planned PD substation) and also have a park/recreation facility there.

In one facility, the Alvord School District sent teachers to coordinate an after-school youth program. Things like this would be easier if we had more libraries. Schools would be more open to partnerships if there were more libraries.

Comments specific to Public Safety functions

Officers filter through different neighborhoods and don't have time to be proactive. Get them spread out over different neighborhoods.

Response times are a good benchmark of Police Department level of service. We have detailed response times now available.

Fire Department bond measure: would be helpful for 20-30 year period. This could include moving City's Emergency Operations Center to the RUSD building on Olivewood.